

Barriers to Consolidation Working Group
February 16, 2004
Conference Call

Participants: John McNeil, Scott Seilstad, and Tonia Bloom
Staff: Kris Goss

John McNeil convened the conference call at 10:03 AM

John updated the group on MTSBA's and OPI's examination of consolidation barriers. Debra Silk at MTSBA is working on a draft piece of legislation. OPI's attorneys are also examining possible legislation.

The Working Group then examined the MREA and MTSBA task force document.

BARRIER: Requirement for public vote

Tonia and Scott have reservations about giving power to exclusively to the board of trustees.

Recent examples include Flaxville and Outlook and Brady and Dutton. Both lost consolidation/annexation votes. Tonia stated that the election is necessary. Scott state that the Dutton Brady vote was 125 in favor 127 against yet the people of Dutton still pleased they put it to a vote

A discussion also took place that if a three year process to consolidate was implemented the board could be replaced before the merger became permanent.

BARRIER: Bonded Indebtedness

Scott brought up the issue of Moore and Hobson the problems of paying for a new gym. Tonia then stated that current law allows trustees to decide whether or not to make the indebtedness part of the consolidation plan. Scott agreed and said that bonded indebtedness was not an issue in Dutton/Brady.

BARRIER: Conditional/Trial Period

Bonded Indebtedness is a hangup in this area as well. The other financial matters would be blended. Tonia stated that the \$200,000 per school entitlement is a large issue. John stated that the full \$200,000 is phased out after 3 years: 75%, 50%, and 25%.

All agreed that there are incentives in the law right now. John talked about the Hingham Rudyard consolidation to Blue Sky: where the district had much staff then when the time ran out problems started.

Thoughts are to pair down or maintain current incentives.

BARRIER: Ten year status of bargaining units.

Severance, positions, first hires, health insurance need to be discussed. Must work with experts at MEA/MFT.

BARRIER: Structure of new board

Joint board and transition issues needs to be clarified.

General Discussion

- ◆ Transition Provisional period allows for a smoother transition
- ◆ Legal Counsels need to continue to look at the situation.
- ◆ End of process: have legislation that is a road map for effective consolidation

Summary

Examine consolidation on provisional basis
Examine legal ramifications of bonded indebtedness
Leave incentives alone
Need contiguous districts

Work on:

Union Contracts

Joint board clarification

2001 study: maintain abandoned buildings for non-school purposes NON-Operating fund of a district.

Thursday February 19, another call will occur at 4 PM

The call ended at approximately 10:50 AM